

And We Will Know This Place for the First Time

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Documents submitted to the Faculty of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of the Master of Fine Arts in the Department of Art

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Thesis Defense Statement

Through sculpture, I explore the limits of what it means to be human through an investigation of the concept of hybridity and its implications within fixed identity categories, such as race. My work questions the relationship between humans and their bodies, and the chasm between the natural and human-made worlds. I use the possibilities within hybridity to speak of a hypothetical place that defies binaries, that is unnamed, and undefined, where possibilities for human form go beyond what we can imagine. In doing so, I present a mythology of a future for humanity that is neither apocalyptic nor salvific, but where we must contend with the damage humans have caused and use all that we have created and all that is beyond our creation in order to persist.

In this proposed future, humans must contend with the trouble they've caused and merge with animals and insects, becoming eyeless, tendrilled, un-gendered beings. My sculptures are physical representations of stages of futuristic human evolution towards becoming more capable and beneficial beings mutually with other creatures. These sculptural works have relinquished some of their humanity and taken on other qualities, which make them more suited to and better able to exist presently and empathetically in the world. Rather than imagining a utopia or dystopia, my sculptures present a look into what could be humanity's imminent future, both troubled and hopeful. These sculptural being have evolved and have bodies composed of what materials, creatures, and spaces they have now that need rebuilding. My sculptures have composted our present in order to reimagine the damaged world we live in and see it as new, as

well as to newly exist within it. In this hypothetical future, humans, rather than further separating their mind and bodies and looking towards technology for salvation, must become more together with their own bodies and with the earth without leaving technology behind. In this way, humans become more efficient beings by merging with creatures for whom and with whom they strengthen their natural abilities.

Through this evolutionary process, these human-like forms have become gradually eyeless and have developed large yonic opening in their bodies. They communicate through tendrils of rubber and metal, and patches of fur. Even in a more advanced state, they remain essentially human. They reject our current ideas of the human body and stretch to become together with other beings into other forms, yet retaining an essential humanity. My sculptures reject the binaries and rigid categories of race, gender, and species with bodies that resemble worms, large hair forms containing a small garden, a mammal and reptile hybrid, a body that shows both flesh and bone. They utilize organic materials such a fur, scales, and corals, in combination with human-made materials such as steel, caulk, and toxic adhesives to convey that there can be no rejection of what already exists on the planet. They make use of all the materials that now makeup the planet, both beneficial and toxic, those that have been discarded, such as old tins cans and tire tubes, those that are valued for progress such as steel, and those that are naturally occurring and beyond human capability to mimic like alligator skin.

This hypothetical future for humanity urgently calls us to question what it means to not have faith but not fall into nihilism, who gets to have faith, or who has the privilege to just give up. My sculptures are of the future, but exist in the present as an urgent call. Their form is our form, their trouble is our trouble, and so humanity can persist if we can see the need to relinquish

some of our ideal of what it means to be human. We as humans cannot go on inflicting damage as we have and valuing intangible humanness over the physical presence of our bodies on earth, and so we must shed ourselves and merge ourselves. We must rearrange, rot, reimagine, and re-see that which we already are.

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Thesis Defense for Masters of Fine Arts Degree in Studio Art

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill



And We Will Know This Place for the First Time.
Installation View at Durham Fruit Company. 2019.



*And We Will Know This
Place for the First Time.*
Installation Detail.
Durham Fruit Company,
2019.



Medusa, Caravaggio. 1597.
Uffizi Museum; Florence,
Italy.



Halfies, Pt. 6: Malady. Detail of
eye. 2019.



*Of, Within, and
Beneath the Earth.*
Front view installed
at Durham Fruit.
2019.

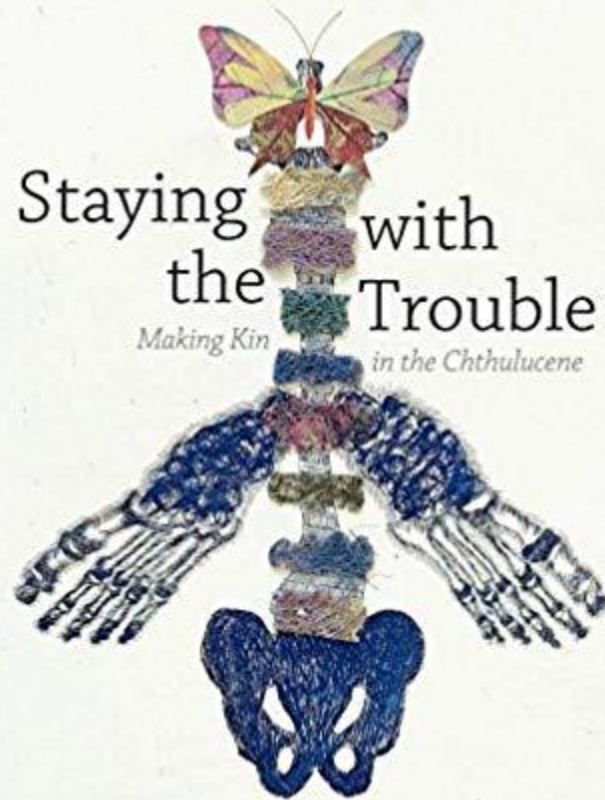


Of, Within, and Beneath the Earth.
Detail. 2019.



*Halfies, Pt. 1:
Úrsula. Detail
of materials.
2019.*

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Staying with the Trouble
Making Kin in the Chthulucene

DONNA J. HARAWAY

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Staying with the Trouble, Donna Haraway. Duke University Press Image.



Image from *Pigeonblog* project page via
Beatriz da Costa. 2017.



Image from *Pigeonblog* project page via
Beatriz da Costa. 2017.



The Room of My Own. Hair,
Steel, thyme, assorted plants.
2018.



The Room of My Own. Installation
in 2019.



The Room of My Own. Detail.
2018.



The Room of My Own. Interior
Detail. 2019.



Halfies, Pt. 5: Lucille, Halfies, Pt. 6: Malady, Halfies, Pt. 1: Úrsula. 2019.



Marble head of a goddess. Greek
4th Century B.C. Met collection.



Halfies, Pt. 1: Úrsula. Steel, saw dust, wood glue, earth, corals, pig intestines, volcanic rock, shark's teeth, alligator garfish scales, rocks, barnacles, lichen, shells, windshield glass. 2019. 66" x 21" x 21"



Halfies, Pt. 5: Lucille.
Detail of Eye. 2019



Halfies, Pt. 5: Lucille. Steel, saw dust, wood glue, tire tube, deer antler, pig jaw, citrine, concrete, dirt, tin can, epoxy, acrylic paint. 2019. 66" x 20" x 20"



*Halfies, Pt. 5:
Lucille. Side
Detail. 2019.*



Cave paintings in Kakadu National Park, Australia. One of earliest examples of “x-ray” art depicting outside as well as bones and internal organs of animals.

<https://www.touropia.com/prehistoric-cave-paintings/>



Halfies, Pt. 5: Lucille.
Eye Detail. 2019.



Halfies, Pt. 6: Malady. Steel, saw dust, wood glue, alpaca fur, thrift store fur, alligator skin, crystal points, rocks, epoxy, acrylic paint. 2019. 67" x 19" x 19"



Halfies, Pt. 6: Malady. Side detail.
2019.





Halfies, Pt. 1: Úrsula. Steel, saw dust, wood glue, earth, corals, pig intestines, volcanic rock, shark's teeth, alligator garfish scales, rocks, barnacles, lichen, shells, windshield glass. 2019. 66" x 21" x 21"



Halfies, Pt. 1: Úrsula. Detail. 2019.



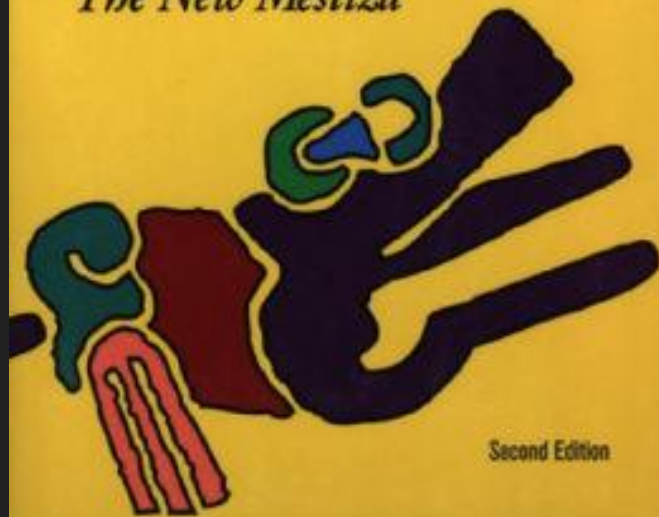
Halfies, Pt. 1: Úrsula.
Back Detail. 2019.

Gloria Anzaldúa

Borderlands

La Frontera

The New Mestiza



Second Edition



U.S./Mexico Border.



Halfies, Pt. 6: Malady. Detail 1.
2019.

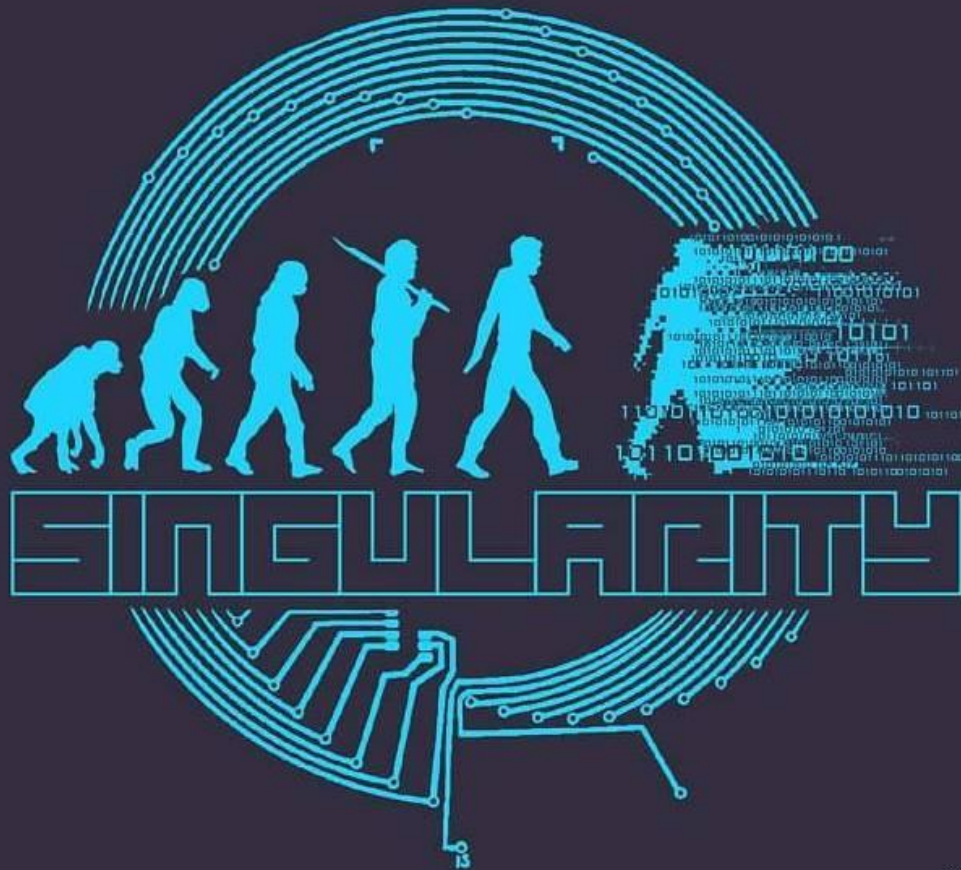


Halfies, Pt. 5: Lucille. Detail of tire tubes. 2019.





Of, Within, and Beneath the Earth. Aluminum, plaster, saw dust, wood glue, caulk, fabric, airport grade reflective beads, tire tubes, epoxy, acrylic paint. 2019. 85" x 76" x 73"





Of, Within, and Beneath the Earth.
Head detail. 2019.



*Of, Within, and Beneath
the Earth. Detail with
cell phone flash. 2019.*



Illustration depicting Encantados (Enchanted ones)
taking the form of an Anaconda.

<https://mythology.net/monsters/giant-anaconda/>



Mounds made by feces of giant earthworm. The Surales, South America. ScienceNews Magazine, 2016. Photographed by José Iriarte.



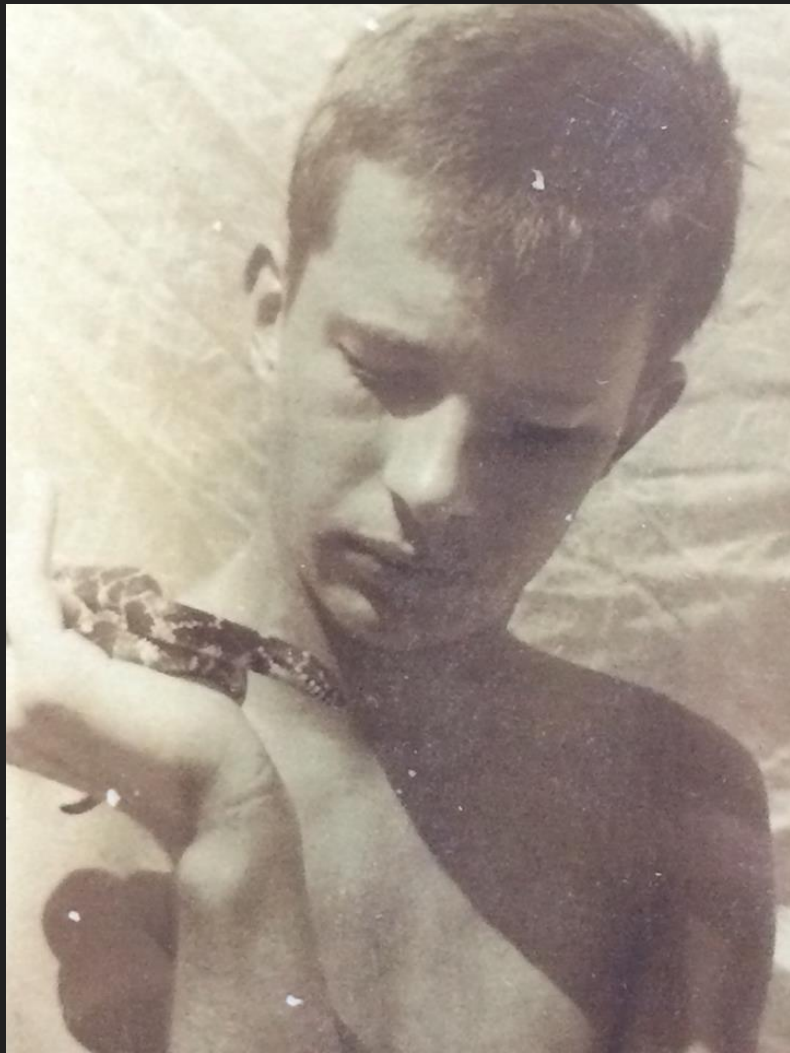
Giant Earthworms that inhabit the
Surales, Venezuela.
[https://www.nrcresearchpress.com/doi/
pdfplus/10.1139/z04-056](https://www.nrcresearchpress.com/doi/pdfplus/10.1139/z04-056)



Lucas Dargan, 2016.
© SarahElizabethCornejo



Female Timber Rattlesnake.
Darlington, South Carolina. 2018.
© SarahElizabethCornejo



Lucas Dargan, 1935.
© SarahElizabethCornejo



Animal jaws and skulls,
wasps nests, and turtle
shell from Darlington, SC.
© SarahElizabethCornejo



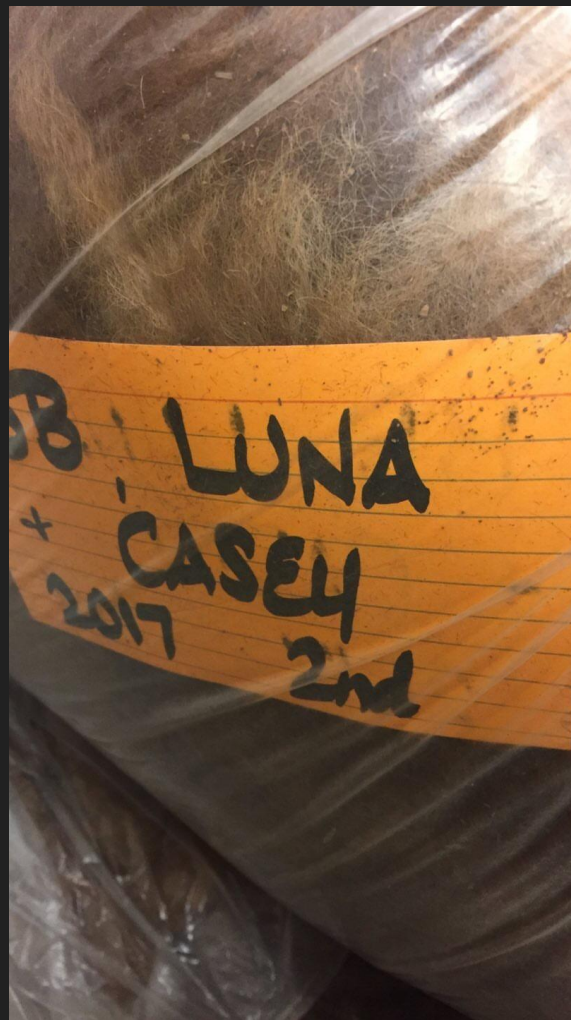
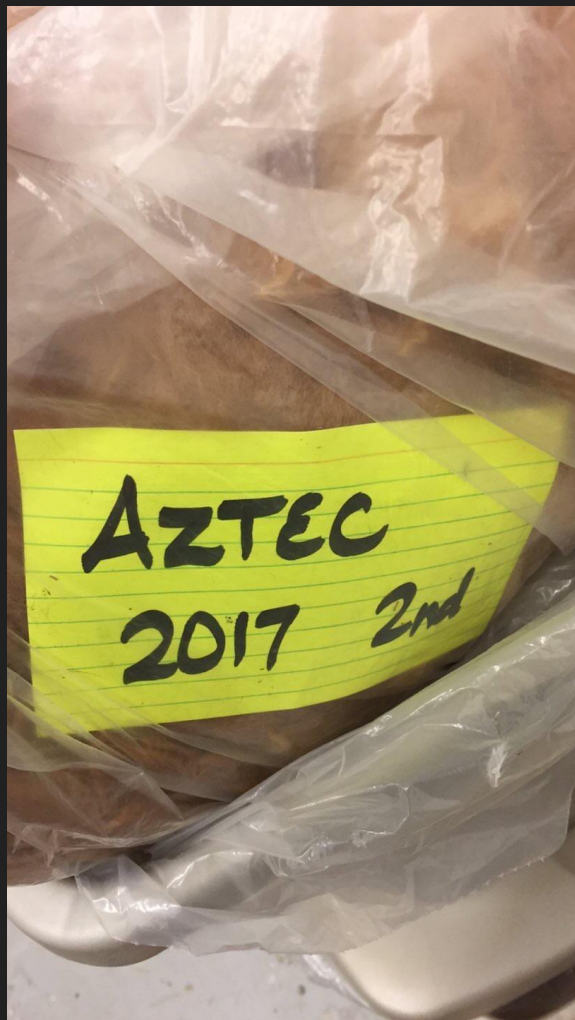
Shells, rocks, and egg sacks
from South Carolina beaches;
North Carolina; New Orleans,
LA; Montserrat and Antigua,
West Indies.

© SarahElizabethCornejo



Cicadas, Luna Moth, Cicada Nymphs, Butterflies. Found in Carrboro, NC; Darlington, SC; Memphis, TN.

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Sheared Alpaca fur from
Hillsborough, NC.
© SarahElizabethCornejo



Sheared Alpaca fur from
Hillsborough, NC.
©SarahElizabethCornejo



Synthetic eyes. Epoxy and acrylic paint.
©SarahElizabethCornejo



Halfies, Pt. 6: Malady.
In-progress detail. 2019.
© SarahElizabethCornejo



*Halfies, Pt. 5:
Lucille. Detail of
materials. 2019.*



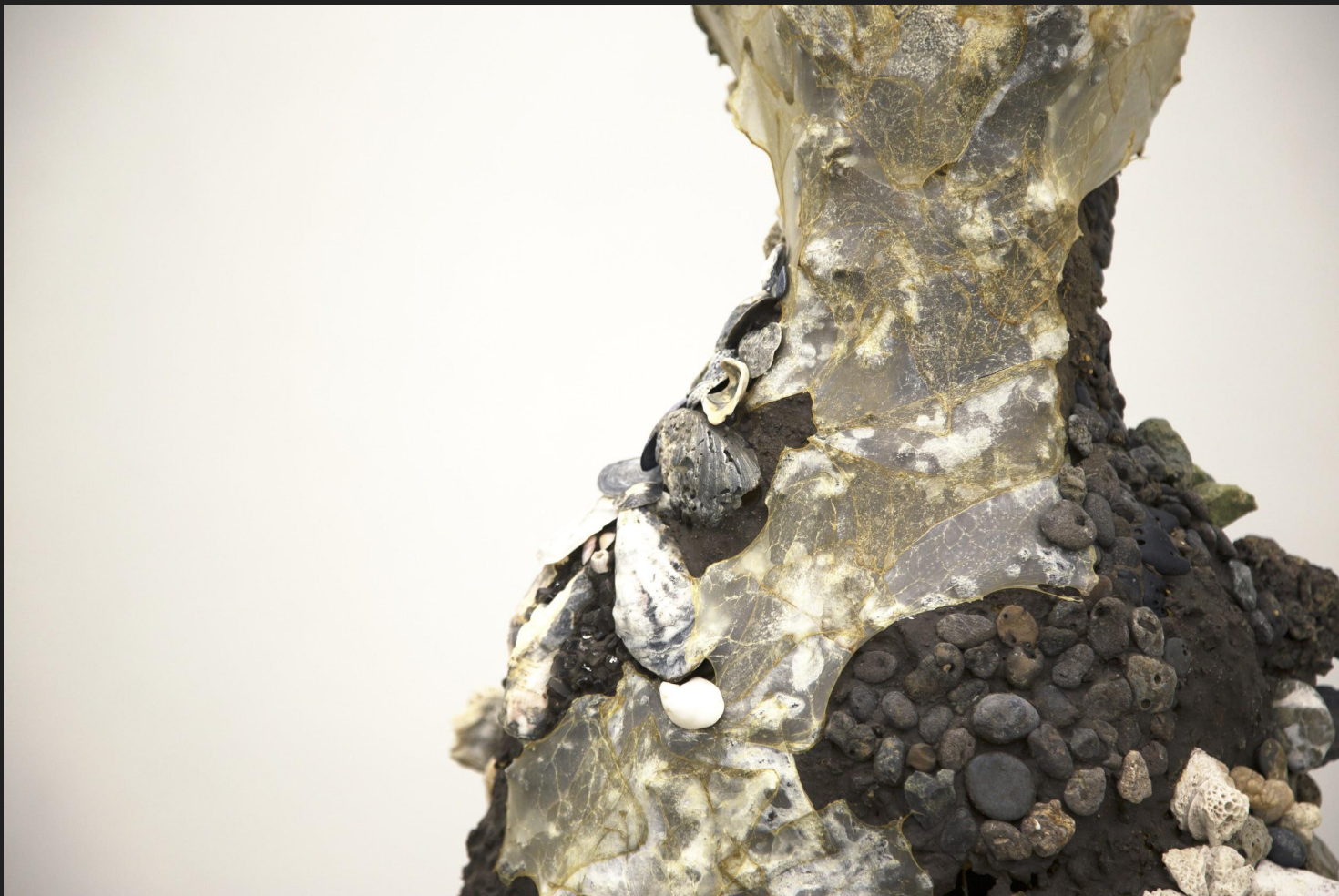
Sierra at Black Creek,
Darlington, SC. 2017.
© SarahElizabethCornejo



Illustration of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*
<https://lithub.com/even-if-netflixs-one-hundred-years-of-solitude-inspires-wonder-will-it-be-enough/>



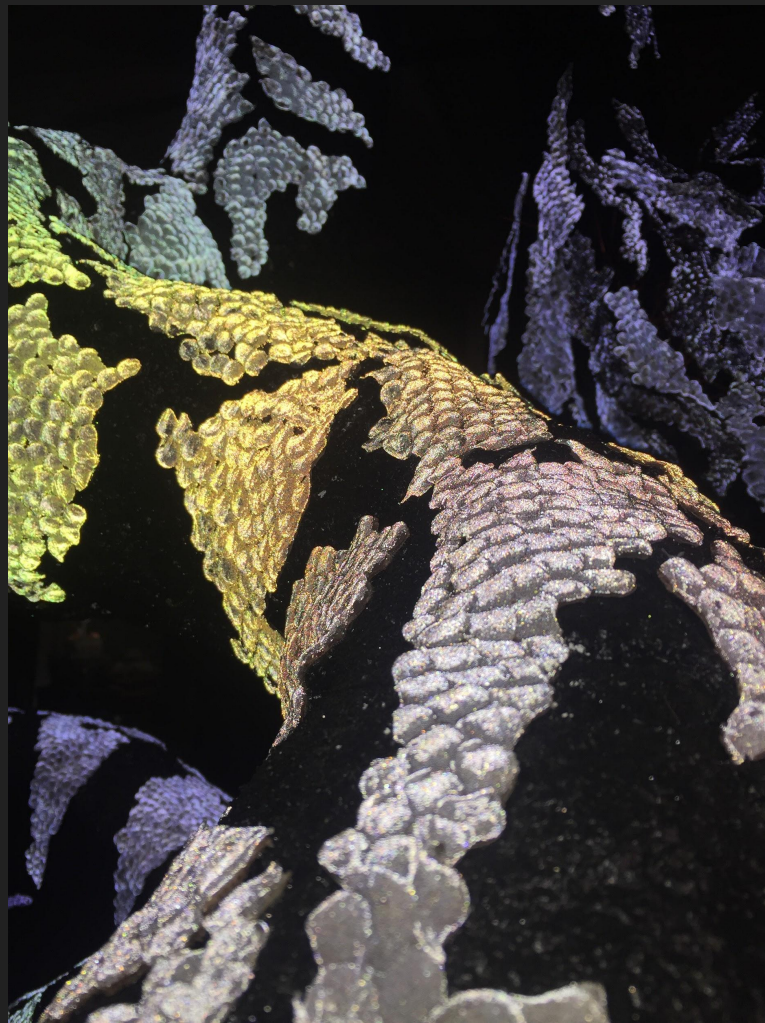
Black Creek. Darlington,
SC. 2017.
© SarahElizabethCornejo



Halfies, Pt. 1: Úrsula.
Back detail. 2019



Of, Within, and Beneath the Earth. "Skin" fabrication.
Caulk and reflective beads
on fabric. 2019.
© SarahElizabethCornejo



Of, Within, and Beneath the Earth. Detail of skin taken on iPhone with flash. 2019.



*Of, Within, and
Beneath the
Earth. Details of
head. 2019.*



The Halfies, and Of, Within, and Beneath the Earth.
Installation view. 2019.